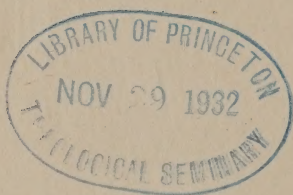


THIS IS MY CHURCH

F. F. BROWN

BX
6462
.7
.B76
1929





Division

Section

BX
6462
.7
.B76
1929

THIS IS MY CHURCH

LIBRARY OF PRINCE
NOV 29 1932
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

This Is My Church

by F. F. Brown

Pastor First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee

Endorsed by the Executive Committee of the
Baptist Brotherhood of the South and
recommended by this Committee as
one of the six books for use
in their Study Course.



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD
OF THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Copyright 1929
Sunday School Board
Southern Baptist Convention
Nashville, Tenn.

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Baptists as a World Power.....	7
I. This Is My Church.....	9
II. The Baptist Message to the Modern World....	17
III. Southern Baptists and Material Prosperity....	28
IV. Beware of Covetousness.....	35
V. Concerning the Collection.....	40
VI. Jesus Over Against the Treasury.....	46
VII. Cooperative Program	52
Causes supported by the Cooperative Program	61

BAPTISTS AS A WORLD POWER

A few years ago Mr. P. Whitwell Wilson wrote in the magazine section of the *New York Times*:

"To anyone who recalls what were the splendors of ceremonial religion, Roman Catholic and Protestant, which once adorned with a divine sanction the banished thrones of the Old World, it is indeed strange to be told that Warren Gamaliel Harding, Charles Evans Hughes and David Lloyd-George should belong, all of them, with John D. Rockefeller, to a 'sect' once so despised, so persecuted and so poor, as the Baptists. Let Lady Sneerwell cease her ribaldry at the staggering thought that of these four men, sons of the Baptist churches, the first is the elected head of a sovereign state, wealthier by far and not less proud than was the France of King Louis XIV; the second is this elected sovereign's minister, who is charged with responsibilities which would have surpassed the utmost ambition of a Richelieu; as Prime Minister of England, the third is endowed with a prestige compared with which the pretensions of Cardinal Wolsey sink into insignificance; while the fourth, as monarch of commerce, has founded, like the Medici or the Rothschilds, the richest family in the world, and administers revenues which but yesterday would have been envied by many a first-class state. All these are Baptists, and among them they are ruling, under democratic sanctions, one-third of the human race.

"It means that over the palaces of emperors, the castles of nobility, the mansions of the merchant, the

fortresses of the militarist, the colleges of the erudite, and the cathedrals of the ecclesiastics, those humble folk, who were immersed in the chilly yet soul-cleansing waters of the river Jordan, who prayed the more zealously in their chapels because they were excluded from parliament and the universities, who were too Puritan even for the Puritans, have at last established their civic claim. God hath indeed put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree! The stone which the builders of modern civilization so contemptuously rejected, the same has become the head of the corner! Such an achievement of prosperity, commercial, political, social, is unparalleled."

CHAPTER I

THIS IS MY CHURCH*

With the exception of the relationship sustained in the family, the Christian has no other in society that is so rich, so fruitful, so joyous, and so fraught with significance, as that of his church membership. There would be a new and better day in all of our churches if every member could be brought to appreciate the privileges, and to recognize the responsibilities of church membership in such a way that his heart would thrill with pride and devotion at the thought—THIS IS MY CHURCH.

Followers of Jesus Christ should realize the seriousness and sacredness of church membership. It is surprising that some hold their church obligations so lightly. With them attendance upon the services of the church is a matter of convenience or whim; there is no thought of responsibility for the support of the church and denominational work; payment of church pledges is the last payment among obligations assumed. Other organizations and institutions are given fuller loyalty than the church of Jesus Christ. This is not true of many people, but it is the attitude of increasing numbers. To be loyal disciples of the Saviour, one must give his church a central place in thought and in life's loyalties.

"What kind of church would my church be,
If every member were just like me?"

*Substance of a pamphlet distributed to members of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Attendance upon all services of the church is the duty and privilege of every member. These services are sufficiently varied in their form to meet the needs of every age and temperament represented in the church. The preaching services, prayer meeting, Sunday school, women's work, men's work and young people's activities offer opportunities for study, training, personal work and congenial companionship to every member of the church.

Members of the church of Jesus Christ should be exceedingly thoughtful and prayerful about all of its services. The benefits to be derived from any of these depend largely upon the mental and emotional attitudes, the moods of the soul, that are brought to the meeting. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We cannot claim this wondrous promise unless we meet in his name. To do this, to meet in the name of Christ, there must be spiritual preparation in advance of the meeting. No member has a right to bring a cold, critical, indifferent heart into any gathering of his church, for such a spirit chills and compromises the power of the meeting.

How necessary, then, that prayer and self-examination in the secret place should precede any form of public service. Preparation for the Sabbath day should begin on Saturday. Late, hectic hours on Saturday night spoil the Sunday morning services for many church members. Late rising on Sunday morning, with its consequent hurried activities, robs one of that poise and peace of mind that should characterize a soul at worship. How much better it is to begin preparation on the evening before, and approach the Sabbath day in a spirit of reverence and with the conscious presence of Christ

in the heart. When we come to understand what it is to meet in the name of Christ, our church services will have a new meaning for us and we will say with the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord"; for THIS IS MY CHURCH.

The problem of the support of our churches and their program at home and abroad is an ever-present one. This problem will be fully solved when every member of the church accepts the New Testament plan of giving. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." "Bring an offering, and come before him." "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." These scriptures emphasize weekly giving as a distinct act of worship.

Like all other graces, giving must be cultivated by each individual for himself. No person can grow in this grace so long as any other member of his family does the giving for him. "*Let every one of you lay by him in store.*"

"Let every one of you lay by him in store, *as God hath prospered him.*" Some people are concerned as to what proportion of the income ought to be given through the church. "The tithe . . . is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." "Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse." If every church member would bring the tithe as a minimum offering Sunday by Sunday, the blessings of God would be upon the church, upon her program, and upon the individuals bringing the offerings, in a way that none of us could measure. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a

blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

One of the deepest longings of every true pastor's heart is to see the members of his church faithful in the stewardship of their possessions. This is not simply a question of securing funds. The spiritual life and development of the Christian is vitally related to his understanding and application of the New Testament teachings of the stewardship of money. One of our best-loved pastors, Dr. Carter Helm Jones, has stated the problem thus: "The unburied dead! No, this is not an undertaker's problem. I am thinking of dead church members who never come, never give, and never evince a symptom of spiritual life. What shall be done with them? The problem of an ecclesiastical cemetery where the 'dead,' who have not died in the Lord, may be decently laid away is vexing many a pastor in all of our land. A dead weight is too heavy for a live church to carry."

There should be a full and frank understanding on the part of every member as to how offerings brought to the church are used. Church reports, associational and convention minutes indicating the distribution of church and denominational funds, should be read with interest by church members. Every Baptist family should receive regularly our denominational literature and publications, at least the state paper and *Home and Foreign Fields*. As church members read of the progress of their various institutions, of the blessings of God upon their missionary work at home and in distant lands, as they recall the share that their own church has in the promotion of Christ's Kingdom, and remember that each individual

who is doing his duty in the church is helping to promote the work which Jesus committed to his church, with such information continuously coming into their minds, there will be gratitude, devotion and pride as each one says, THIS IS MY CHURCH.

The compelling need of our churches is neither larger numbers, more money, nor different programs, but a fuller consecration of life to Jesus Christ. Carelessness, prayerlessness, indifference and open inconsistency of professed Christians within the churches constitute a greater menace to the cause of Christ than infidelity, atheism, and other "isms" without the churches. A well-known evangelist pungently says: "The supreme need of the church today is not a brighter light in the pulpit, but a steadier glow in the pew." Surely the words of Jesus, "Let your light so shine before men," are as pertinent today as when they were spoken in the long ago. One explanation of the tremendous power of the early Christians is to be found in the words, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." "They had been with Jesus!" Something about them—their words, their bearing, their spirit—suggested Jesus. We must not shrink from the fact that we represent him and that those about us have a right to expect of his followers a growing likeness to their Saviour.

Baptists point to the New Testament teachings as the source of their doctrines, ordinances and mission in the world. It is well to remember, however, that among these teachings purity of life and integrity of character hold a large place. In the Christian experience doctrine and conduct are indissolubly united. Christianity not only offers a way of salvation, but it is a way of life—a

way to live. Therefore, as Baptist churches move on in their organized work in the name of Jesus Christ they should seek to cultivate and deepen the spiritual lives of their constituency by the various means of grace our Lord so abundantly provides—Bible reading, prayer, meditation—for these can never be replaced by organization or activities. We must guard with all diligence our personal relationship to the Saviour. Each member should strive to live a life so sincere that no one could question the genuineness of his profession. And as the spiritual life of the individual is quickened, deepened, and purified by fellowship with him, the church member will spontaneously exclaim, THIS IS MY CHURCH.

There is a growing conviction on the part of many thoughtful religious leaders that the next great revival in America will be within the churches, a revival of Christian conduct, a revival that will emphasize and underscore some old-fashioned virtues, such as rugged honesty, unquestioned integrity, and personal purity.

To say nothing of those whose moral conduct before the world brings reproach upon the name of Christ, every church must face the problem of careless and indifferent members. It is said that from thirty to forty per cent of those received into our churches drift away and lose all touch with the church. The progress of the gospel is impeded and our churches are embarrassed by this large number, who, like thoughtless sheep, drifting farther and farther away from the fold, are ultimately without the influences of the church and have abandoned any effort to serve in the name of Christ.

In every church family those who are earnestly striving to live the Christian life and render acceptable ser-

vice should follow the wayward, indifferent, backslidden ones with love and sympathy and prayer. The spirit and attitude of Jesus, apparent in the lives of those who surround them in the church, will do much to reclaim this group to useful lives for the Saviour. Faithfulness on the part of even a single member is a silent, ceaseless protest, an unanswerable rebuke to those who continue in conscious, wilful sin. It behooves every Christian to hear Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Surely no light, cheap word of criticism against the church of Jesus Christ should ever pass the lips of a member of his church. Helpful suggestions and constructive criticism every member of the church should feel free to offer at all times. But we are passing through a period of unrest, suspicion, distrust in every walk of life. Frequently this attitude manifests itself in the church. If changes and adjustments are needed in the church, the members should approach such needs in a spirit of faith, courage and cooperation. Yes, *cooperation*, for spiritual democracy finds its highest expression in cooperation, not in dissension. If calamity or even reproach should be brought upon the church by the carelessness, thoughtfulness, or sin of some member of the church family, the other members should come closer to each other, closer to Christ, and in an hour of crisis each one should say with unwavering loyalty, THIS IS MY CHURCH.

A few years ago I read with appreciation these words of another:

MY CHURCH AND I

"My church is the place where the Word of God is preached, the power of God is felt, the Spirit of God is manifested, the love of God is revealed, and the unity of God is perceived.

"It is the home of my soul, the altar of my devotion, the hearth of my faith, the center of my affections, and the foretaste of heaven.

"I have united with it in solemn covenant, pledging myself to attend its services, to pray for its members, to give to its support, and to obey its laws.

"It claims the first place in my heart, the highest place in my mind, the principal place in my activities, and its unity, peace and progress concern my life in this world and that which is to come.

"I owe it my zeal, my benevolence and my prayers. When I neglect its services, I injure its good name, I lessen its power, I discourage its members, and I chill my own soul.

"I have solemnly promised in the sight of God and men to advance its interests by my faithful attendance, by reading the Holy Bible, by never neglecting its ordinances, by contributing to its support, by meeting with my fellow members, by watching over their welfare, and by joining with them in prayer and praise and service; and that promise I this day renew, before God my Father, Christ my Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, my Sanctifier."

CHAPTER II

THE BAPTIST MESSAGE TO THE MODERN WORLD

Surveying the world life about us, one can scarcely fail to note the restlessness and confusion, the spirit of inquiry and investigation, the protest against established customs and standards, the revolutionary changes in economic, social and religious life as outstanding characteristics of our day and age. While such a survey may not be encouraging from some viewpoints, we must remember two things:

1. When the last word has been said about modern life, the most significant thing is that it is plastic. Nothing is fixed. All life, like molten metal, is hurrying to the moulds that are to form and shape it.

2. We are part, a vital part, of the life of our age. In pulpit and classroom, in the home, the office, the shop—wherever we are—we are helping to erect the standards and create the ideals of today and the long tomorrow. Under God, the moulds that are to determine the form and shape of this plastic life of which we are a part are in the hands of those of us who live in this generation.

We speak of "The Baptist Message to the Modern World" with confidence, because we hold that the content of that message is pertinent to any and every age. While changed conditions may call for a different emphasis, from time to time, the heart of the message remains the same. Through the centuries, this message has been

spoken in many languages, to different races, to various political, economic, social and religious conditions, and has been found adequate. With a New Testament in our hands, we believe that our message, like our Lord, is "the same yesterday, today and forever."

Here we emphasize some of the outstanding elements of our message in their application to our day and generation:

I. REGENERATION

Baptists are not the only people who believe in the regeneration of the Spirit. Other denominations have spoken and are speaking this message to the world. The doctrine of regeneration is not a differentiating Baptist belief. Moreover, it is not our purpose to attempt any analysis or discussion of this central New Testament teaching. What we here insist upon is that this fundamental truth is not obsolete. Facing the modern world, with its culture and refinement, with its progress and achievement, the heart of our message is the New Birth. We catch the message as it falls from the lips of our Lord upon the listening ears of Nicodemus in the long-ago, and we move into modern society with its complex relationships, with its pushing, surging, restless confusion, with all of its baffling, perplexing problems, and to each disturbed, inquiring Nicodemus we say, "there must be a change so vital, so revolutionary, so radical, that it is called a re-birth." The message has always been timely because the need is perennial. But just now there are groups of teachers who claim that they have made a diagnosis which reveals a different need in the heart of man, and that new remedies must be offered. Nor are they slow to suggest the remedies.

1. *Extreme Socialism*

These teachers claim that the trouble with man is not internal but external. Men are not bad; their surroundings are bad. The reason we stammer and stutter, falter and fail, is that the scenery is poor. Change the scenery, give us different surroundings, and we will be graceful as queens, winsome as magicians. Environment is made the scapegoat for the sins of the world. Personal responsibility is removed, the pillars of manhood are shaken; we are left to be herded and horned through the world by our surroundings.

No thoughtful person will speak lightly of the tremendous influence of environment in shaping and moulding character. Baptist people take the stand with the most enthusiastic in their efforts to improve conditions in the home, the shop, the reeking city tenement, the dark, narrow alley and in the slums that sweat their filth and disease and crime. At the same time we believe that the supreme need of humanity is not a change of scenery, but a change of nature. Not new surroundings, but a new heart.

In a former pastorate I knew an extreme socialist, who came to me frequently to discuss socialism. He had drifted from the larger cities of the North and East to a small Southern town. His life had been one of such cruel hardships that he had grown bitter. He had known what it was to take his place in the bread line in New York City and to sleep in Central Park. And he knew the teachings of socialism from Karl Marx to Eugene Debs. We had talked until the hands of the clock pointed to past one in the morning. He arose to go, and I said to him, "I agree with much that you say

about the injustice of our present economic and social order. There ought to be many changes. But do you know that I believe that you are just as bad as I am, that you are just as selfish, just as sinful; that if the Utopia you dream of should come and all men were placed in well-furnished homes, surrounded by every comfort, even the luxuries, it would not be long until we would drift back to the present condition, unless men themselves are changed." He replied, "Mr. Brown, I know what you mean. I respect your opinion, but do not agree with you. Men are not bad; their environment is to blame." The belief of this man is a prevalent one and is gaining ground. I read somewhere of an interesting painting—the picture of a monkey, chattering with cold, led into a room where there seems to be a warm, cheerful, blazing log fire. The poor freezing monkey draws near to the blaze, but continues to shiver and chatter and moan piteously. The painting was beautiful to look upon and desirable for some purposes, but ineffective as a heating agent. The theories of the social reformer are more than painted pictures. They may be, under God, great realities that will minister helpfully to humanity, but they are not true correctives for the central malady of sin. The poison, corrupt waters cannot be sweetened and purified by painting the pump. The trouble is internal. The remedy must work from within. "Ye must be born anew."

2. *Heredity*

For several years we have been obsessed with the tyranny of heredity. The teaching is not so pronounced now as thirty years ago, but it is still prevalent. This

group of thinkers tells us that the trouble with humanity is bad blood. Correct the blood, and people will be good. We would not ignore the power of heredity. We would, on the other hand, link arms with the teachers of this school and say, "Yes, better blood will do much for humanity; it will mean a stronger, cleaner race; it will do much to empty our hospitals; it will help to send from the cradle a race that will move through the world with more vigorous bodies, a new spring in the step, a new light in the eye. But there is a poison in the blood which the legislation of the most advanced school of eugenics cannot remove. The black drop which fell into the blood of our first parents in Eden's Garden has colored the blood of the race." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." There is only one source of cleansing. And then we kneel at the Cross and sing:

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

3. *Education*

In the field of education there are two tendencies which Baptist people must meet with this message of regeneration.

(a) In the field of secular education, there are those who hold that the malady of the race is ignorance. Give people knowledge, and they will be good.

(b) In religious education, there are, among Protestants, many who teach that physical birth brings us into the kingdom of God. The supreme task of the church is, by proper training and instruction, to keep us there.

To this first school of thinkers, our reply is that Baptist

people yield first place to none in their appreciation and pursuit of knowledge. We know that from the time that the boy Jesus remained in the Temple to converse with the scholars, Christianity has been the friend of the mind and the advocate of the increase of knowledge. As Baptist people, we are willing and anxious to follow fearlessly the form of truth into whatever fields it may lead. As Baptist people, we are not afraid to peer from the observatory through the longest telescope, and in the laboratory look through the most powerful microscope. We cheerfully join the excursions that are being made into land, and sea, and sky, and rejoice with you over the trophies discovered and brought back. But knowledge is not sufficient. The unregenerate tramp who breaks into the freight car and steals a can of tomatoes would, without a change of heart, with increased knowledge and trained mind, steal the whole railroad system. So we would evangelize our education. We would carry the message of regeneration on to every campus and into every classroom. We would speak the message of the Cross in every observatory and laboratory. We would train the heart to throb while we teach the head to think. We would say with another:

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul according well,
May make one music as before, but vaster."

To those in the field of religious education who teach that our physical birth brings us into the kingdom and the task of Christianity is, by proper instruction, to keep us there, our answer is: We believe that, in his own wondrous way, the love of God surrounds our babies and

that the finished atonement of Christ hovers over them in infancy. But as they reach the age of accountability, each one of them must voluntarily accept the plan of salvation and yield to the Saviour. Jesus Christ plants himself before the entrance of the kingdom and says: "I am the door." In the home, in the Sunday school, in the church, everywhere, we must tell people, "There's no one to save you but Jesus. There's no other way but his way." And those who hear the message can never escape it.

This illustration: In a former pastorate of mine, there is an elderly lady who is superintendent of the Primary department of the Sunday school. Hers is one of those gentle, kindly faces, with a sweet, loving disposition and an earnest, consecrated life which is too little appreciated. For many years she has taught the children of that church and town. "Aunt Bet," as she is lovingly called, taught many of the men who are now the leaders of that great church. She taught some others who have not as yet become Christians. Sometime ago one of these non-Christian men, a man prominent in the business circles of the city, moral and clean in his personal life, frank and outspoken in his expressions, was approached by an active worker in a certain Protestant church. This personal worker was urging Aunt Bet's former pupil to go into the church; telling him that he was a good man; all that he needed was church membership. But Aunt Bet's teaching had "struck in." Our friend replied, "I know that I ought to be in the church, but before I offer myself for membership, I must have 'that something' that Aunt Bet used to talk about down yonder at the Baptist church." And we all know what

"that something" was. It was the message of Jesus: "Ye must be born anew."

II. COMPETENCY OF THE SOUL

In the second place, we mention as an integral and indissoluble part of the Baptist message, the competency of each individual soul in religious matters. This competency is, of course, under God. And the message is a distinctive, differentiating Baptist belief. In his *Axioms of Religion*, Dr. Mullins shows very clearly that "the doctrine of the soul's competency in religion, under God, is the distinctive historical significance of the Baptists." In *Reasons for Christian Education*, Dr. James calls our attention to the powerful influence of this teaching in three directions:

- (1) The individual and his God.
- (2) The individual and his church.
- (3) The individual and his state.

By competency of the soul, we mean that in religion the transaction is between each lonely soul and the only God. The application of this principle is far-reaching, deep and significant. Applied to the teaching of Catholicism, the truth of the competency of the soul would remove every priest and altar, would tear down every confessional, and would destroy forever the pernicious doctrine of penances. This message of soul competency should be spoken with such emphasis that he who sits on the banks of the Tiber as God's vicegerent would be silenced and dethroned as men and women bow before the Saviour and humbly say: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

The message of soul competency would push aside any person, group, or teaching that stands between the soul and the Saviour. One who comprehends the competency of the individual soul realizes that the initial and ultimate religious experience is between the individual soul and God.

Jesus Christ taught that all men are made in the image of God; that his atonement was for all; that the reception or rejection of the atonement was an individual, personal matter; that each one was capable of decision and must decide for himself. This was the message of Jesus. He moved among men and asked them to become his followers—issued his call to fishermen and aristocrats, publicans and sceptics, alike—the same message for all. “A fish cannot follow a bird”; a bird cannot follow some other animal—only like can follow like. So he said to men, rich and poor, cultured and illiterate: “Follow me.” He looked upon them all as God-like and competent. He put one hand on Dives and the other on Lazarus—led both to the Cross; stripped the purple from the prince and the rags from the beggar, and said to each alike: “Made in the image of God.” This message of the dignity, the worth, the competency of each individual soul before God, it is our high privilege to proclaim.

III. THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS

The source and the climax of the Baptist message is the Lordship of Jesus. We turn to the Book and from every page the face of Jesus Christ looks upon us as the face of the Eternal Son—the effulgence of God’s glory—the Bright and Morning Star. We bow before him as Lord of heaven and earth—the Ruler of the universe. On

his head are many crowns, and not least among these crowns is the crown of authority. His words are final. Much of the modern world does not agree with us when we speak of the authority of the lowly Nazarene.

In the philosophical world, there are those who speak beautifully of Jesus as the ethical crown of the race. They read the Sermon on the Mount and acknowledge that "never man spake like this man." They follow that life so filled with loving, gentle ministry and say, with Pontius Pilate, "I find no fault in him." They enthrone him among the great and good, and leave him there.

In the social and economic world, there are many who tell us that the teachings of Jesus are obsolete; that he was a great man and lived a truly wonderful life. But he was only a Palestinian Jew; his life was narrow and provincial; his teaching was only to his day and his surroundings. It would be impossible to apply his principles to our vast, complex social order.

In the religious world, there are many who acknowledge him, accept him as Saviour, but do not yield to him as the final and unquestioned source of authority.

As we follow these different lines of thought about our Lord, at times our hearts grow heavy, and we say with the women at the empty tomb, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Then we see him with the triumph of the resurrection glory on his face, and our hearts leap with joy. He says, "Peace be with you," and shows us his hands, his feet, and his side. "Then were the disciples glad when they had seen their Lord." We linger with him through those eventful days of his risen walk on earth. Then we gather with him on the rounded top of Olivet. We hear

him speak: "All power is given unto me—go ye, therefore—." And as we go, with the vision of our risen, ascended Lord beating upon our hearts, we find ourselves saying with another:

"In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin,
He is his own best evidence,
His witness is within.

"No fable old, nor mythic lore,
Nor dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years;—

"But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He;
And faith hath still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee."

We crown him as our source of authority. If it is a question of the method of regeneration, crown him. If it is a question of conduct, crown him. If it is a question of church polity, crown him. If it is a question of ordinances, crown him. If it is a question of our mission in the world, crown him. Jesus Christ is not only the central glory of the past, he is the central glory of the present. He is abreast of the times. He is our contemporary. He is our King Immanuel. He is sufficient for all of the clamoring needs of humanity. His name is above every name:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

"Let every kindred, ev'ry tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all."

CHAPTER III

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND MATERIAL PROSPERITY

God has placed Southern Baptists in a land of superior natural resources. Several years ago an eminent authority wrote: "The South has twice as much coal and iron as Great Britain, Germany and Pennsylvania combined. The South has more than one-half the standing timber of the United States. The South holds a world monopoly on cotton production. The South has the climate and soil for the support of a dense population and the creation of a vast amount of wealth." You and I live in a day when these marvelous resources are being developed rapidly, and already great prosperity has come to the Southland. Baptists hold their proportionate share of the South's material resources. What is the significance of it? Just this: When Archimedes discovered his law of the lever he said: "Give me a place to stand—a place off yonder somewhere—to secure a footing, and I will take my lever and move the world." Southern Baptists have a place to stand—a combination of natural advantages rarely found in any land. They have the lever—New Testament Truth. If we do not lift the world closer to God in our generation, we have forfeited an opportunity which angels might covet.

Our prosperity is a fact of tabulated statistics. We have been reminded in our denominational literature that there are nearly 4,000,000 white Baptists in the South

today who have a combined annual income of \$1,600,000,000. If this income were faithfully tithed, there would come into the treasuries of Southern Baptist churches at least \$160,000,000 annually. The record shows, however, that all Southern Baptist churches together gave to all objects, local and general, last year only \$40,000,000, or only two and one-half cents on the dollar. Many pastors preach to congregations whose automobiles represent a larger investment than the entire church property, plus the annual contribution of the churches for the promotion of the kingdom of God. Our prosperity is a fact. Our failure to use our possessions for the promotion of Christ's kingdom is likewise a fact—a depressing, alarming fact—a fact written large in the reports that are brought to every convention, telling of enormous debts on every board and almost every institution that carries the Baptist name. Face to face with facts—the fact of our prosperity—the fact of our indifference and lethargy, I am raising the question of whether our growth of soul is commensurate with our growth of wealth. “I pray that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” Surely the Spirit of God moves in our midst with the admonition, “Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.” “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”

The most threatening peril before us is not poverty—grim and gaunt. The most threatening peril is that of possessions—possessions without the touch of consecration—possessions with the personal, possessive pronoun encircling them—“mine, mine, mine”—possessions that

carry with them a false sense of security—possessions that create self-sufficiency and pride—possessions that smother and paralyze the soul as they substitute things for God.

Southern Baptists should “praise God from whom all blessings flow,” that they now have the means to carry out the divine program. Consecrated to God, our possessions—constituting our chiefest spiritual peril when held for selfish purposes—would be transformed into redemptive agencies, ministering to our enrichment of soul while advancing our Saviour’s kingdom. Consecrated to God, the wealth of Southern Baptists, threatening us with spiritual bankruptcy, would remove the enormous and growing obligations resting upon the denomination, answer every call of the kingdom in the homeland and people the earth with missionaries of the Cross.

How, then, may we, as followers of Christ, transform our possessions from threatening enemies into friendly allies—allies that shall extend the joined hands of comrades to us in the culture of our souls and in the promotion of Christ’s kingdom? “Make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.” “Ye cannot serve God and mammon,” but you can serve God with mammon.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you.”

My answer to the question is:

1. Accept, cultivate and practice the New Testament teachings of stewardship.

Accept as we do the plan of salvation; cultivate as we do other virtues; practice as we do other graces—the grace of stewardship. “See that ye abound in this grace

also—"this grace also," and the apostle is talking about giving. He has mentioned faith, utterance, knowledge, love. Now he comes to "this grace also"—the grace of beneficence, the grace that stands lonely and all but forgotten in the midst of her sister graces.

We are not to shrink from the personal responsibility that is ours as trustees of our possessions. It is easy to lose ourselves in generalities here. The tendency is to shift the personal application by saying: "Yes, we are stewards of the gospel, the stewards of our time, our talents, stewards of all that we have and are." I agree with those who make such statements, but just now I am urging the other truth—stewardship of possessions. It is easy to admit the theory of God's ownership and say, "The cattle on a thousand hills are his." "The wealth of field, and forest, and mine—is all his." We sing with religious fervor:

"My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of the world in his hands!
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full, he has riches untold.
I'm the child of a King, the child of a King!
With Jesus, my Saviour, I'm the child of a King!"

Are we willing to make the personal application of God's ownership? My bank, my store, my farm, my salary, is his, and I am personally responsible for the administration of what my Father has committed to me. We sing without reluctance:

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee."

Are we prepared to sing:

"Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold."

This personal application of stewardship measures and manifests the reality and vitality of our devotion to Jesus. No power except the transcendent power of the grace of God can conquer the inherent selfishness in our hearts and release our tightly-clasped, reluctant fingers from the money that belongs to God.

Much has been said of "Christianizing the social order." Frequently the question is raised: Is our gospel sufficient to regulate the vast economic and industrial systems of our day? We answer, "Yes! Unhesitatingly, yes! Our gospel is sufficient for every need, for every problem of our complicated world." But, here, I am raising a more practical question. Is the gospel of Jesus sufficient to deliver his followers from the curse of materialism and the blight of covetousness? Has the transforming power of his grace conquered our selfishness, our avarice? Will our methods of acquiring, holding, and distributing money stand the white light of the teachings of Jesus? Has the gospel made of me a faithful trustee, or do I remain a proud proprietor? Do my possessions minister to my spiritual growth, or do they coil about my soul and, with ever-tightening grasp, stealthily and steadily paralyze and destroy all that is highest and holiest within? Our own spiritual welfare demands that we accept, cultivate and practice the New Testament teachings of stewardship.

2. My second suggestion is that we must adopt some method in this practice of stewardship.

If material possessions are to be spiritual allies, there must be some definite plan in the expression of stewardship. The New Testament clearly outlines the plan: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay

by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Regular—systematic—proportionate giving is the New Testament recommendation. What proportion? "As God hath prospered him." But just what proportion of my income does that mean? is the question from many honest hearts. Well, to many of us, it means the tenth as a minimum. Numerous pastors do not hesitate to practice and preach the tithe as the least scriptural proportion to be used in the expression of stewardship. These pastors quote and emphasize: "Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse." "The tithe is the Lord's"—"Even the Pharisees tithe."

Others do not agree that the scriptures teach tithing. They are sincere followers of Jesus—some of them giving regularly more than the tenth. I do not enter any argument with them. My appeal is for the absolute necessity of setting aside some definite proportion as belonging to God. My appeal is for some worthy method in the application of our stewardship. So far, no better method than the tithe as a minimum has been suggested. Until some better plan is wrought out, why not accept this one, which is clear, simple, and definite? It has been tried by numbers of Christian people and found to be a source of spiritual culture, as well as fruitful in kingdom work.

You will permit this observation. The tithers in my congregation are, for the most part, the regular attendants upon all church services. They are the deacons, the Sunday school teachers, the active workers in the W.M.S., the B.Y.P.U. and in personal workers' bands. If tithing, as some fear, binds those who practice it in formal legalism, I fail to note any disastrous results in the Christian experience of those to whom I minister.

Moreover, it is noticeable that those who practice the tithe as a minimum are the ones who go on to larger proportions in their giving—even to the entire income. Three years ago I sat with two men at lunch, both of them tithers, and we talked of our church and our denomination. Presently one of them called the other by name and said: "I am about ready to say to you, 'Enough money.' We have sufficient income to support our families. We may ruin our children by leaving them too much. Let's covenant together to join Mr. ——— who is giving his entire income. Let's spend the rest of our lives making every dollar possible, and give every cent of it."

I told this story to a group of friends as we were on the way to Stockholm. The next day a gentleman sent for me and said: "I heard your story yesterday and couldn't sleep last night. I was a poor boy and worked my way through college. God has been good to me and I am now prosperous. For years I have been giving the tithe, and more. But I am thinking of what your friends said. What if money should ruin my family? I am praying that one of my children will be a missionary." I talked with him for sometime and asked him to see Dr. Mullins, who was on the ship. The last time I saw him, he shook my hand in Stockholm and said: "It is settled. I am going home to make every dollar possible and am going to give it all to the promotion of Christ's kingdom." If one hundred Southern Baptists would join him today, they would inaugurate a movement that would shake the earth.

CHAPTER IV

"BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS"

(Luke 12: 15)

A recent writer has called our attention to how Tennyson in his *Northern Farmer* has the galloping horse, "As he canters down the road, to make the music with his hoof-beats that spells out the word, *Property, Property, Property*. Somehow the echo of that canter is heard across the hills and through the dells of all time until at last it is lost far away in the dim beginnings of things. There are times when it is silenced temporarily, and then it recurs, *Property, Property, Property*. And we all stand by the roadside and nod our heads to the music of it."

So insistent and persistent has been the passion of possession—with individuals, groups and nations—that some students do not hesitate to name it the dominant motive in personal life and the determining factor in civilization. Around this ruling passion motives of life have clustered and conduct has been regulated. Around this storm center endless wars have been waged, national boundaries have been established, and international relationships determined. Controlled by such considerations, Karl Marx reaches his conclusions and presents his "Economic Interpretation of History." Even those of us who do not accept such extreme positions as those taken by some of the socialistic writers must frankly admit the central, influential, and all but insatiable desire for material

possessions that sways the human heart and life when possessions are enthroned.

Now Jesus faced that issue squarely. Not for a moment did he trim or play down or ignore that one of the great, dominant, central passions in the human heart was that for property. Before studying the concrete case presented in the text, very briefly may we summarize in three statements some conclusions that grew out of a study of the teachings of Jesus concerning material possessions:

1. Jesus taught principles of thrift and industry and underscored the requirements of absolute honesty and justice in acquiring possessions, while at the same time he forever insisted to his followers that they should hold and distribute them unselfishly and generously.

2. The teachings of Jesus have formed the foundations, erected the standards, and determined the atmosphere by which all permanent material prosperity has been nourished, developed and assured.

3. With a divine understanding of human weakness, Jesus repeatedly warned his followers against the insidious power and unceasing peril of possessions when they are enthroned in the heart.

"The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."

"Beware of covetousness."

"Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee."

CONCRETE CASE

We have before us a man who was impressed by the unusual power and discrimination of Jesus. Listening to those matchless teachings which fell from the Saviour's lips he realized, as others did, that "Never man spake

like this man," and that "He taught as one having authority." Impressed, not only with his words, not only with the great principles that he taught, but by something about his personality that suggested Jesus as a great arbitrator to whom men would readily yield, this man comes to him and says, "Speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." Jesus did nothing of the sort. He did not even inquire into the details of the case. He did not offer for one moment to make any kind of adjustment between these two men. He did not send for the sheriff. He did not even offer to arbitrate the dispute. Far more important than to interfere in this one case, and temporarily adjust it, is the eternal teaching which, if obeyed, permanently settles the property question. Searching the heart of the one who made the request—searching all of our hearts—he issued the warning that has echoed across the centuries and sounds in our hearts today: "Beware of covetousness." Over against this difficulty he laid down heaven's decision: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." No matter what "Bradstreet and Dun" may say, no matter what "Who's Who" may say, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." "Beware of covetousness!"

This leads us to the secret of the method of Jesus. Growing out of the teachings of Jesus, remedial legislation has been passed that has served the world helpfully. Growing out of his teachings, principles of equity have been established in many departments of life. We ought to thank God for every restraint that society has erected which makes it easier for men to do right and more difficult for them to do wrong.

But the direct and fundamental method of Jesus was to deal with human nature, to correct wrong attitudes of thought and life, to direct warped, twisted, selfish, sinful human nature into the straight, open pathway of his leadership and thought. It is far more important that both my neighbor and myself, quarreling over a boundary line, should pause and hear Jesus say: "Beware of covetousness," than for Jesus to settle the dispute between us. It is infinitely more important for both of us to kneel before him as he says, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth," than for either to obtain his selfish desire. Society will not let anyone take away from me that which is mine, but society cannot go down into my heart and life and deal with a covetous soul. There is where Jesus works always. With him diagnosis precedes therapeutics. Jesus diagnoses the case before he offers a prescription. The Great Physician treats causes rather than symptoms.

Recently I said to a good physician, "Doctor, can't you do something to relieve this terrible suffering—hours and hours without sleep—can't you do something about it?" He smiled and said, "That's just a symptom. Your lung is filling up and I want to prevent pneumonia. I'm fighting the cause and must not be diverted to a struggle with symptoms." The Great Physician comes to human nature, passes his strong, cool hands over our feverish souls, and we realize that—

"He reads each wound, each meaning clear,
He puts His hand upon the place
And says, 'Thou ailest here and here.'"

"Beware of covetousness!"

The Master closes this matchless teaching with the vivid illustration of the rich fool. With a few bold strokes he paints a portrait that after more than nineteen hundred years looks down upon us clearly defined, every feature of it, the very glint of the eye, the expression of the countenance, the set of the face, everything about that portrait as fadeless as the truth that it represents. Underneath the painting he wrote, "Thou fool." He presents this colossal egotist as he speaks of "my fruits," "my goods," "my barns," "my soul." The man was a fool, not because he had wealth and property—barns bursting with grain—he was a fool because he thought that he could feed his soul on corn. He was a fool because he failed to take account of the uncertainty of life. He was a master in manipulating things. I doubt not that all who knew him feared to clash with him when it came to deciding upon the issues of a bargain. But there is a pathos in his self-sufficiency that seems to be a part of that attitude of life. How childish to hear this great, successful financier saying, "many years, many years, many years," and over against it God is saying, "This night, this night, this night." There is nothing more striking in all literature than the boldness with which Jesus presents that poor deceived soul, surrounded by his goods, making his plans for the years as if he controlled the time element, and Jesus saying, "This night." He ignored God. "Soul, take thine ease." God says, "This night is thy soul required of thee." God always has the last word.

"Beware of covetousness."

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."

"Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee.

Whose, then, shall these things be?"

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING THE COLLECTION

(1 Cor. 16: 1)

While a student at college I heard Dr. R. J. Willingham relate a story that has remained with me through the years. He told of how an itinerant preacher traveling through north Georgia came to a small town and sought lodging for the night. The clerk at the little hotel informed him that all of the rooms were taken. The preacher was turning away, tired and dejected, when the clerk called him back and told him that there was one empty room but that it was never occupied, because it was haunted, that he was welcome to it if he was not afraid of ghosts. The weary man gratefully accepted and went to the room. He prepared himself for bed, read a passage from the Bible, and knelt by his chair in prayer. As he prayed the ghosts came, a number of them, and stood around him. When the prayer was finished he opened his eyes, saw his visitors, swiftly estimated their characters, and remarked, "We will now take up the collection." The ghosts fled in confusion.

It is true that those who attend our church services do not hurry away when the pastor says, "Let us now take up the collection," or "The deacons will come forward and we will receive the offering." But the fact is, the collection is not the most popular part of the service. Our offerings are not made with the attitude of enthusiasm with which we sing. We do not give as fervently as

we pray. There is not the serious thought and the atmosphere of praise and worship surrounding the collection which mark other parts of the church service. Much of our giving is formal and mechanical, cold and calculating, meager and meaningless. For the most part there is a lack of spontaneity, joy and generosity when we come to the "collection."

The appeal for a liberal offering to support kingdom work may be fervent and impassioned. The presentation of the causes may be strong, logical and forceful. But the response is reluctant and insufficient. Southern Baptists have numbers and wealth. Yet most of our churches close every year with a deficit, and the majority of our institutions and boards are carrying debts which total large sums. Some of our secretaries are discouraged and pastors are distressed. Teachers and missionaries at home and abroad move on heroically but they are pained, surprised, and anxious about the situation. Many of our people are indifferent, others are restless and disturbed. Some, and they are among the best, are inclined to be a little impatient.

A few years ago one of our leading magazines carried the following items, placed in parallel columns, and said to be based on actual facts. These statements indicate an attitude that is all too prevalent with many church members:

CLIPPINGS FROM THE
SOCIAL COLUMNS

"Mrs. B. entertained with bridge at the Country Club, Wednesday, in honor of her guest, Mrs. S., of Albion, Michigan. Thirty guests were invited to meet Mrs. S., and a delightful afternoon was enjoyed."

"Mrs. C. will be hostess to the members of her club next Tuesday afternoon. Twenty-seven members are enrolled in this rather exclusive club, and after an elaborate luncheon several papers will be read on the life and times of Charles Dickens."

"Mr. D. and family arrived at church last Sunday in their new Lincoln sedan, which he recently purchased, preparatory to a western tour of six weeks."

"According to her annual custom, Mrs. F. gave a garden party to the members of the X. Y. Z. Card Club yesterday afternoon and evening. The lawn was brilliantly illuminated, covers were laid for forty persons, and supper was served at twilight. This is an event to which the club members look forward with keen pleasure. No one was more elegantly attired than Mrs. F. Her rare jewels added to her native charm and made her friends proud of her in every way."

FACTS GLEANED FROM
THE CHURCH RECORDS

"The city of which Mrs. B. has been a resident for fifteen years is raising a fund of half a million dollars to build a new Y.W.C.A. Mrs. B. writes, desiring to help, and encloses her pledge for \$15, payable in three annual installments."

"Mrs. C. pledges twenty-five cents a week to the support of the church. Sorry it has to be so small, but you know one must take care of one's own needs before helping others. Mrs. C. was sorry to miss prayer meeting last week, where the life and times of Jesus was discussed."

"Mr. D. made a pledge of \$500 to the 75-Million Campaign. But some business reverses have forced him to take advantage of the clause in the pledge which provides for non-payment in case of unforeseen reversals."

"Mrs. F. gives \$20 a year to her church and \$5 a year to missionary work. The Every Member Canvass Committee had a hard time securing a pledge for this sum."

The discussion which follows does not offer a panacea for our financial difficulties, or present a "cure-all" for our denominational ills. It is an earnest appeal that "the collection" be kept in its New Testament setting. In the first verse of the 16th chapter of 1 Corinthians we find the expression, "Now concerning the collection." But the entire 15th chapter leads up to this expression. Back of the financial appeal is the presentation of many of the vital doctrines of our faith. Back of the collection is the mighty tide of spiritual power that filled and swayed the heart of the one who had been calling over to himself the great central things of redemption before he mentioned finances.

Let us follow him on some of the steps that lead to the collection: "Now concerning the collection."

1. *The Cross.* "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." . . . "Now concerning the collection." He is reminding them of the gospel which he had preached to them, the gospel by which they were saved. He leads them to Calvary's hill and points to a crucified Christ. This is his first step toward the offering: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." "Now concerning the collection." The whole question of the collection is seen in a new perspective when brought to the Cross. There the Christian heart says:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

2. *The Empty Tomb.* "He arose again the third day according to the scriptures." "Now concerning the collection." This is the second step. From the Cross he

leads us to the Empty Tomb. Our Saviour is alive. Joseph's tomb could not hold him. We worship a risen Lord. We stand by the empty tomb and hear with eager hearts the word from the angels: "He is not here; he is risen." "Now concerning the collection." We sing with gratitude:

"Crown Him the Lord of life!
Who triumphed o'er the grave;
Who rose victorious to the strife
For those he came to save."

The collection has a different appearance with the light from the face of our risen Lord playing upon it. But wait. The apostle would lead us another step.

3. *The Resurrection and Future Life of Christ's Followers.* "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." "Now concerning the collection."

Our hearts are tremulous with joy as we read the discussion indicating how Christ is simply the "first fruits" from the grave, how "afterwards" the friends of Christ are to come back. On and on we read this great Pisgah chapter, which closes with the mighty shout of triumph, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." "Now concerning the collection."

I do not extend the discussion. My appeal is that we must get the New Testament background, the New Testament atmosphere, the New Testament spirit for the collection.

The urge of the great centralities of our faith must be back of our offerings. The needs of a broken, bleeding, sinful world are out there awaiting the collection. Our own spiritual development is involved in the response that we make to the collection.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

CHAPTER VI

JESUS OVER AGAINST THE TREASURY*

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury. (Mark 12: 41.)

What a scene! The group of worshipers silently passing by and casting their gifts into the treasury! The Lord of all glory watching! His divine eyes searching the souls of the people! His divine mind understanding the motive of every heart and swiftly registering the proportion of the possessions represented by each offering.

He saw the woman as she brought her gift—a gift small and insignificant by human measurements. She was a widow, and since her husband was taken she had moved more slowly. On her face and in her eyes was a soft, gentle look, the light of serene faith and exalted hope. She had come up to the temple to worship God, and her offering was a vital part of that worship. As she moved to the treasury her soul was going out to God in adoration and thanksgiving. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Modestly, joyously, sacrificially she made her offering. Jesus, over against the treasury, saw and understood. The words of approval and appraisal were spoken, words that ring bells of joy in hearts that enter into spiritual fellowship with the woman of long ago, or words that

*Printed in pamphlet form by Laymen's Brotherhood of Southern Baptist Convention and in different denominational publications.

sound notes of warning to other hearts that have no sympathy with the one whom Jesus so strongly commended.

Jesus over against the treasury as we worship! "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury." What a theme for meditation! Our Saviour sits over against the treasury as we come up to worship today. His eyes sweep the fields of the soul. He watches as we make our offering. He sees what we bring and notes the spirit which prompts us. He knows the amounts given in his name—for his work. He knows, too, the sums kept for our own purposes. With heavenly mathematics he determines the proportions represented by each offering.

JESUS WATCHES

He sees the group in every church who do not come to the treasury at all. They claim him as their Saviour. They look to him for his blessings day by day. They sing hymns about him. They pray in his name. Some day they hope to stand in his presence, "Redeemed by his blood." But they do not meet him at the treasury. Surely his message to this group is, "Thou shalt not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able." "Bring an offering and come into his courts."

JESUS WATCHES

He sees the group who give as a matter of respectability. There is no careful thought, no earnest prayer back of their offering. Grudgingly, reluctantly they dole out the minimum required by respectability. They are members of the church. Their self-respect will not allow

them to frankly decline all responsibility for their Saviour's work. They shrink from being classified with the group of nominal Christians who positively refuse to contribute to the support of Christ's kingdom. Many of them are prosperous. Their names are prominent in social and civic movements. They support the various clubs and other organizations to which they belong with liberality, but at the Lord's treasury all generous impulses seem to be frozen. Coldly, formally, without joy, they bring their meager offerings as a stern duty demanded by respectability. And the Saviour watches. His pointed question to each of their hearts is: "What hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" His solemn warning to each one of them is: "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth."

JESUS WATCHES

He sees the group—slowly but steadily increasing—of those who come up to the treasury with gladness in their hearts. They acknowledge themselves stewards—trustees—of their possessions. Many of them are tithers. They have adopted and are practicing the tithe as the minimum when they approach the Lord's treasury. They believe and accept the scriptures which say: "Bring ye all the tithes into the store house." "The tithe . . . is the Lord's." "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."

Some of them have gone beyond the tithe and continuously bring larger proportions of their incomes to the Lord's treasury for use in kingdom work.

Some of the offerings bear the red marks of sacrifice. Those who bring them have quietly and prayerfully determined: "Neither will I offer . . . unto the Lord my God of that which cost me nothing." Jesus sees. He knows. He understands.

JESUS WATCHES

His eyes are lighted with interest—with divine love. On his matchless face varying emotions register themselves. Those who come up to the treasury where he awaits them are his own—bought with a price. Oh, that we may but look into his face as we bring our offerings! Oh, that we may but see his poignant sorrow as we appear before him—"empty." Could we but see his deep grief as we come formally, moved by mere respectability, with reluctant offerings! Could we but see the look of divine approval on his face as joyously we recognize our stewardship and meet him at the treasury!

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury."

Let us reverently look into his face before we make our offerings—the face that we hope one day to see more plainly as we stand in his glorious and glorified presence and "know even as also we are known."

A STORY OF TITHING

Some months ago Mr. J. H. Anderson of Knoxville met a representative of one of the Methodist Mission Boards, and while traveling together they talked of the problem of securing funds for the great enterprises of Christianity. They agreed that the best solution of the difficulty was an effort to enlist every member of every church to give the tithe as a minimum. His traveling companion told Mr. Anderson the following story:

A rather small Methodist church, located in a rural community of one of the Northern States, was greatly embarrassed for finances to carry on the work of the church. Most of the members of the congregation were living on small farms and they thought of themselves as poor and unable to care for their church and church work adequately. Things went from bad to worse. The roof of the building leaked. Some of the lights were broken out. The treasury was empty and the situation seemed hopeless. At a regular business conference there was a full and frank discussion of the whole situation. No one had a suggestion to offer until at last the old miller, who operated the village mill to which most of them brought their grain, arose with an astonishing proposition. He said that he would take over the management of the finances of the church for one year; that he would make all repairs, pay all bills on one condition: No one must ask him any questions about where he was securing funds and let him explain everything at the next annual conference. With great surprise and some doubt the congregation agreed to the old miller's proposition. Before long the dilapidated building was transformed—

roof, windows, broken seats all made good as new. There was no difficulty about the pastor's salary. The various apportionments for mission work were paid promptly. The congregation looked forward to the annual business conference with eager anticipation. Where was their treasurer getting the money that was being expended?

When the day for the conference came, the old miller arose, gave his report of funds received and disbursed, adding that there was a balance on hand. Then he said: "My friends, you want to know where the money came from. It came from you, and you were none the wiser. Every time any member of this church brought grain to my mill I took out the Lord's tenth. This tithe of grain from the congregation I sold from time to time and thus received money to carry on our work. And," he added, "none of you here knew the difference."

No application is necessary. I am not commending the policy of the miller, but I am emphasizing the significant fact that if the tithe were in some way secured from each of us, not many of us would know the difference and our work everywhere would be strengthened and enlarged.

Why not bring it voluntarily, regularly, joyously?

CHAPTER VII

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

During the recent years of confusion and restlessness in almost every department of life, the history of our Baptist people is a record of continuous progress. There have been struggles, difficulties and problems, but in them all and through them all we have gone on with our faces to the future. And as we have moved on with our work there has come a closer unity, a richer fellowship and clearer vision. The struggles are not ended, the difficulties are not overcome, and all of the problems are not solved. As we glance ahead, it is well to remember that in our practical plans and methods we are passing through a period of transition and adjustment. Let us not be discouraged. With gratitude to God for his blessings in the years that are gone, with unfailing faith in him for guidance in the years to come, we face the future with the words of another: "Hats off to the past—coats off to the future."

Your committee has asked me to speak on our Co-operative Program.

1. My first word with reference to our Cooperative Program is that it is not something new, except as to name and method. The institutions and enterprises fostered by our program are the institutions and enterprises that have stood at the center of our denominational life through the years. No group of men in Richmond, Nashville, or any other place, have come together and started

something new. The Cooperative Program represents the deepest conviction, the most careful and prayerful thought of the Southern Baptist Convention as to the best method of sustaining and promoting the kingdom work which Baptist churches have fostered through the years. The great objective of our denomination—Missions, orphanages, hospitals, and Christian education—must not be lost sight of because they are brought together in a budget and supported by a method that has an inclusive name—the Cooperative Program. This thought was brought home to me in a very forceful way shortly after I came to Tennessee, some eight years ago. I was at Carson-Newman College, seated on the platform, waiting to have some share in the exercises of the day. (It so happens that I have the honor of being a trustee of that institution.) As I sat there on the platform, I thought of how my grandfather and another young preacher, mountain boys in western North Carolina, had climbed through the mountains and found their way, walking to old Mossy Creek school at Jefferson City. They remained there for a year and then climbed back over the mountains to western North Carolina to spend their lives preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. There I sat with other trustees and friends of Carson-Newman College. But that Christian college was born in the hearts of our fathers as they bent over their Bibles and received some great convictions which swayed them and held them, and led them—convictions as to the fundamental place of Christian education in our kingdom work. In the same way, most of our institutions were born and launched from the New Testament

convictions that dominated our fathers. The work of our program is not new.

2. The work of the Cooperative Program is our distinctive Baptist work. These institutions and enterprises belong to Baptist people and must depend upon Baptist people for their support. They are our children. If they are kept alive, grow and develop, Baptist people must feed and nourish them. Other people may look with favor upon our denominational work and even manifest a kindly interest, but if Baptist work is sustained it must be done by Baptist people. Most of us live in cities, towns and communities where there are great common interests that challenge all Christian people alike and are fostered by the community as a whole. But when it comes to our own denominational work, we had as well understand that there are no others to support it except Baptist people. I would say the same thing with reference to Presbyterian work, were I speaking to Presbyterians; or of Methodist work, were I speaking to Methodists. When this definite realization grasps our hearts, there will be created a new sense of responsibility with every Baptist church and with every member of such church. This word is not spoken to criticise adversely any worthy community, civic, or fraternal movement. You will permit me to say, however, that as I see even worthy movements claiming a larger sustained support from Christian people than the definite task of giving the gospel of Christ to the world, I cannot refrain from saying: "It ought not so to be." Every Christian ought to extend the joined hands of a comrade to the support of every worthy movement in his community. But he should give his first and largest loyalty to the

church of Jesus Christ. There is no enterprise seeking to serve humanity which ought to live that was not born either directly or indirectly from the teachings of Jesus. There is a wise word about "killing the goose that lays the golden egg." There is a possibility that we, as Christians, may weaken and starve the mother who has borne and given to the world sturdy, healthy, useful children.

My emphasis here, however, is that in a very definite way Baptists must face their personal responsibility in carrying on Baptist work. Sometime ago it was necessary for one of our denominational institutions in East Tennessee to provide a certain sum of money. When the movement was started, I thought that there were many reasons why I should not personally make a contribution. I have a definite weekly pledge to the work of my church, and another annual pledge to a building fund, and other pledges which must be paid promptly. Then I thought that my church ought to be excused. We are carrying a rather large program here in the city. We are trying to do our best for the Cooperative Program. We owe a large sum of money on our building. Surely, my church ought to be excused! But as I thought along this line, it occurred to me that every other pastor and every other church could reason in the same way, and I decided that my personal contribution should be just as large as I could make it, and that my congregation should be asked to do their best in this crisis with one of our Baptist institutions.

I went with a group of men to another city to talk with some of our brethren about this movement. A splendid group of business men met us at the hotel, where

they had abundantly provided for our entertainment. At the close of the meal, the chairman asked me to make a statement with reference to the matter that brought us to the city. I did so, repeating at length the reactions, as stated above, that were mine when the emergency was first presented to me and the conclusions that had later formed in my mind. When I sat down, one of the finest Baptist laymen of Tennessee, an active member of a Baptist church in the city that we were visiting, arose and said: "Dr. Brown, when we learned that you were coming to present this matter to us, we decided that the situation in our church was such that we simply could not have anything to do with it. We decided to meet you here, show you every courtesy and ask you to excuse us this time. You know that, outside of our regular obligations, we have a heavy debt on our church building, and there is a mortgage on our property at this time. After hearing the statement of your experience, I want to say, and I believe that the other representatives of my church here will join me, that our church will provide whatever amount you have decided we ought to give and, if necessary, we will go to the bank, borrow the money, and I will sign the note."

What had happened? This fine Baptist man had seen that an institution that was his was facing a crisis and realized his individual responsibility. That spirit must be cultivated until our Baptist people, individually, recognize their personal responsibility in sustaining their denominational work.

3. The Cooperative Program, to succeed, must hold a central place in the life and loyalty of our churches. Our work cannot move on with conquering strength, if

it is regarded lightly and superficially. There must be convictions about the eternal significance of this program that will keep it at the focus of our vision.

Our Cooperative Program can only be maintained by regular, systematic, proportionate giving. This is best secured by pledges received from the individual members of our churches in an annual every-member canvass. In this canvass we should emphasize the following:

1. *Prayer*

We pray for missions and for missionaries. We would not think of entering a special revival campaign without calling all of our people to prayer. Surely, when we move into the every-member canvass, it will be in an atmosphere of earnest and importunate prayer.

2. *Information*

My judgment is that we presume knowledge on the part of the members of our churches with reference to our denominational work which many of them do not actually have. At the risk of being tiresome to some of them, we must go over the A B C's of our program from time to time—"line upon line—precept upon precept—here a little, there a little." What a wonderful thing it would be if every church would see to it that our denominational papers and magazines were placed in every home of the congregation. Before Jesus asked his disciples to pray about sending laborers into the fields, he said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields."

3. *Persistent, Hard Work*

The canvass will never be a success unless pastor and great numbers associated with him are willing to

spend many long hours doing the detail work. There must be a spirit that will never stop until every member of the church is seen. This may require a number of visits and the inclination is to throw up the hands and exclaim: "What's the use?" But the churches that are meeting with most success are the ones that are willing to do this severely practical and oftentimes difficult work.

4. *Weekly Offering by Every Member of the Church*

Surely this needs no discussion.

5. *Emphasis Upon the Tithe*

Last year as one church moved up to the canvass a resolution was passed in the deacons' meeting which the pastor read to the entire congregation. This resolution modestly stated that the pastor and deacons of that church believed in and practiced tithing as a minimum in their giving—that their conviction was that the tithe "is the Lord's," and ought to be brought into his storehouse.

In all of our efforts to promote finances we must remember that sustained giving flows only from the hearts that are fed and nourished by the unfailing grace of God. Our appeals for offering must be made, as they are made in the New Testament, from a context that centers around a crucified and risen Lord. No offering can be meager and reluctant, formal and mechanical, that is prompted by devotion to Christ. The grace of giving, standing among us, isolated from her sister graces—consequently pale and neglected, will flourish only when nourished and cultured by close contact and

association with the other members of her New Testament family. Offerings that come from hearts aflame with love for Christ, lives that seek to know and do his will, souls impassioned to promote his kingdom will be spontaneous, generous and joyous.

Southern Baptist have accepted the Cooperative Program in theory, but we are not supporting it in practice. In closing, I suggest two things:

1. As a general rule, denominational agencies and institutions, sharing in the Cooperative Program, must refrain from special appeals or campaigns to increase their income and enlarge their work. This principle must be clearly recognized and faithfully kept. A crisis may arise when it will be necessary for one of our institutions to come among us in a special effort to raise money; but when such crises do come the institutions and causes represented must go afield only with the sanction and consent of the other cooperating agencies and the call which they issue must not divert a dollar from the support of our Cooperative Program.

2. The principle stated above must be observed by pastors and churches. Realizing that the Cooperative Program is the best method of sustaining the great objectives of our denomination, we must not allow this program to be embarrassed. We must not appeal, or permit appeals for any object in the Cooperative Program that will take a single dollar from the other causes in the program. This does not mean that we will refrain from presenting any Baptist cause to our people for a special offering in case of emergency. But it does mean that we will frankly call our people to make such

offerings over and above contributions to our cooperative work.

May I close by repeating and emphasizing that special contributions in case of emergency must not diminish our regular offerings to the Cooperative Program.

CAUSES SUPPORTED BY THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

1. *Southwide Causes*

1. Foreign Missions	25 %
2. Home Missions	11 $\frac{1}{4}$ %
3. Christian Education	8 $\frac{1}{4}$ %
4. Ministerial Relief	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ %
5. New Orleans Hospital	1 %

Total50 %

2. *Statewide Causes*

1. State Missions	18 %
2. Christian Education	19 %
3. Orphans' Home	8 %
4. Memorial Hospital	5 %

Total50 %

The above indicates the percentages used by the Baptist State Convention of Tennessee. This will vary in different states.

The chart on page 62 follows \$1.00 from the church to the cause it supports.

HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

By the Baptist State Convention of Tenn. The method of Distribution applies in all of the states, tho the percentages vary.

Foreign Missions, 25c

Home Missions, 11½c	Evangelism	Panama
		Cuba
		Indians
		Soldiers
		Seamen
		Deaf
		Jews
		28
		36 Mountain Schools

**SOUTHWIDE
50c**

**\$1.00
THROUGH
LOCAL
CHURCH**

**EXECUTIVE
BOARD
NASHVILLE**

Christian Education, 8¼c	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville . . . 2½c
	Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at Fort Worth . . 2¼c
	Baptist Bible Institute at New Orleans . . 1½c
	W.M.U. Training School . . ½c
	American Baptist Theological Seminary . . ¼c
	Educative . . . 1c
Ministerial Relief, 4½c	
New Orleans Hospital, 1c	

(Representing 1 year subscription.)

State Missions, 18c

**STATEWIDE,
50c**

Missions, 18c	New and Weak Churches	
	Sunday School Dept.	
	S. Y. P. U.	
	W. M. S.	
	Laymen's Work	
Christian Education in Tennessee, 19c	Carson-Newman College .	5c
	Union University . . .	5c
	Hall Moody College Debt	3c
	Tenn. College (Girls) . .	5c
	Ministerial Education . .	1c
Orphans Home at Franklin, 8c		
Memorial Hospital, 5c		

MUCH IN LITTLE

"The minimum equipment for any true world citizen is a pocket New Testament and a small globe. Both these in our wonderful times can be bought in a five-and-ten-cent store. They can be carried in one's coat pocket.

Any man who dares to study both these, each in the light of the other, will soon feel in his bones the thrill of a new age on this earth.

This simple outfit put to continuous concentrated use will be worth more to a preacher of the gospel than all the weak skimmings and pale scraps from a great library. These two little articles put to careful use in our habits of thought would make missionaries of us.

Get a globe; it is round like the earth. Don't get a flat map. Use maps only in connection with a globe. It makes a soul bigger to keep our planet visualized. A globe kept before the eye gives us a picture of the earth; it puts us in touch with the currents of human life all over the earth. Continual use for one year of a pocket Testament and a pocket globe would revolutionize the life of many of us preachers. We need it."

—*Walt N. Johnson.*

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library

1 1012 01130 3452

[illegible]

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

